Policy and Sustainability Committee

10am, Tuesday, 6 August 2019

Working Groups

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1.   Recommendations

1.1   To note the overall reduction of member/officer working groups.

1.2   To agree the revised working group framework outlined in appendix two.

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Report

Working Groups

2.   Executive Summary

2.1   An outline of the Council's current member/officer working groups which form part of its political management framework, is presented in response to an action of Council from 30 May 2019.

3.   Background

3.1   The Council approved a framework for the creation and operation of working groups on 23 October 2014.

3.2   The Council agreed on 30 May 2019 that a report be submitted to the Policy and Sustainability Committee to review the number and nature of working groups.

4.   Main report

4.1   Working groups remain a popular vehicle for policy development and wider discussion with partners and stakeholders. Such groups facilitate the meeting of officers and elected members without the constraints and formalities of the committee structure, allowing flexibility in format, location, timing and membership. Proposals can be developed in private before being made public at a later stage, which can be particularly useful to allow full and frank discussion for example, between the Council and external stakeholders. Matters can also be progressed at a faster rate than through the formal committee cycle by utilising regular focussed meetings before being brought back to the relevant executive committee for a decision.

4.2   Groups tend to vary between short-life working groups and long-standing groups such as the Joint Consultative Group. Council policy formalises the establishment of such working groups requiring that they are established by the relevant executive committee with a clearly defined remit, membership and timeline before being reviewed each year.

4.3   The number of working groups has reduced from 44 to 27 since re-appointments were made last year. This has been a significant reduction but still exerts pressure

on both officer and elected member time and resource. Despite a lack of decision-making powers, a proliferation of working groups can give the impression that business is being conducted without scrutiny or due process. Working groups can also suffer from a lack of drive or 'mission drift', where they struggle to achieve established goals, co-opt new causes and continue in establishment for longer than was originally intended. Working groups cannot be delegated decision-making authority and this can lead to confusion about the status and authority of the body.

4.4   It is recommended that working groups continue as they perform a flexible and valuable role within the Council, however, committees should give greater consideration to the need for a working group and if a working group is the best way to achieve stated objectives.

4.5   It is recommended that committees should consider what they wish to achieve and whether a working group is the best vehicle for doing this. The following serves as a guide as to what purposes a working group can serve:

Can be dealt with by working group	Not appropriate for working group
To develop policy or proposals for approval by parent committee	To take a decision or incur expenditure on any matter
To scrutinise policy or proposals in detail before presenting findings to parent committee	To discuss a matter where the Council/responsible committee has no authority
To scrutinise or develop implementation details before presenting for approval by parent committee	To consider any matter without reporting back to the parent committee
To allow roundtable consultation with key stakeholders on matters within the parent committee's remit	
To provide more regular and in-depth oversight of a major project or initiative	

4.6   If the matter can be dealt with by a working group the committee should consider whether the benefits of flexibility, privacy, officer or stakeholder involvement and ability to make quick progress (as detailed at 4.1) are required.

4.7   The working group framework (appendix 2) which provides a guide for executive committees when creating working groups has been updated to reflect the need to consider alternatives to working groups and to reinforce the need for annual review.

4.8   In instances where a working group is not appropriate, or the benefits are not required, there are two main options.

    4.8.1   Consider the matter at committee.

4.8.2   Establish a sub-committee with delegated power.

4.9   While these options do not provide the benefits listed above, they do allow for debate and any decision to be taken in an open and transparent manner.

5.   Next Steps

5.1   Executive committees consider annual working group re-appointment reports in Autumn 2019. This will provide an opportunity for each committee to dissolve any groups which have served their purpose or are no longer required. It is recommended that a lifespan for each re-appointed group is agreed as part of this report after which the group will cease to exist unless extended, for stated reasons, by decision of the relevant executive committee. The committee should also ensure at this stage that working groups have clear objectives and consideration is given to whether they are the correct vehicle for those objectives.

6.   Financial impact

6.1   There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

7.   Stakeholder/Community Impact

7.1   Member/officer working groups provide a key vehicle for policy development and discussion with stakeholders, informing the decision-making and governance of the Council as a whole.

8.   Background reading/external references

8.1   Minute of City of Edinburgh Council – 24 October 2014

8.2   Review of Political Management Arrangements – Full Council – 30 May 2019

9.   Appendices

Appendix 1 – Working Groups

Appendix 2 – Amended Working Group Framework

Appendix 1 – Working Groups

Ref	Name of Group	Responsible Committee	Number of meeting in 2019	Number of meetings in 2018	last meeting
1	Brexit Working Group (short life)	Policy and Sustainability	3	3	23-Apr-19
2	All Party Oversight Group on Granton Waterfront (short life)	Policy and Sustainability	1	1	01-Mar-19
3	All Party Oversight Group on West/South West Edinburgh (short life)	Policy and Sustainability	2	0	09-May-19
4	Equalities Working Group (short life)	Policy and Sustainability	1	0	29-Mar-19
5	Redford Barracks Working Group (short life)	Policy and Sustainability	1	3	24-May-19
6	Sustainability Working Group (short life)	Policy and Sustainability	1	0	24-Jun-19
7	Welfare Reform Working Group (short life)	Policy and Sustainability	1	2	22-Mar-19
8	Edinburgh Extension Act 1920 (short life)	Council/Lord Provost	0	3	31-Aug-18
9	Meadowbank Sports Centre and Stadium Working Group (short life)	Culture and Communities	1	2	16-Jan-19
10	Tourism and Communities Working Group (short life)	Culture and Communities	1	3	08-May-19
11	CCTV Working Group (short life)	Culture and Communities	3	3	12-Jun-19
12	Corporate Parenting of Looked After Children Member/Officer Group (standing)	Education, Children and Families	2	3	01-May-19
13	Duncan Place Working Group (short life)	Education, Children and Families	0	0	15-Sep-16
14	Gaelic Implementation Steering Group (standing)	Education, Children and Families	2	5	12-Jun-19

#	Name	Category			Date
15	Wester Hailes Working Group (short life)	Education, Children and Families	3	2	12-Jun-19
16	Consultative Committee with Parents (standing)	Education, Children and Families	2	3	28-Feb-19
17	Elected Members ICT and Digital Sounding Board (standing)	Finance and Resources	2	0	25-Apr-19
18	Joint Consultative Group (standing)	Finance and Resources	3	4	04-Jun-19
19	Edinburgh Shared Repairs Services and Legacy Programme Board (standing)	Finance and Resources	2	6	05-Jul-19
20	Edinburgh Homelessness Forum (standing)	Housing and Economy	2	2	04-Jun-19
21	Homelessness Task Force (standing)	Housing and Economy	1	7	04-Jun-19
22	Local Access Forum (standing)	Transport and Environment	1	1	31-Jan-19
23	Central Edinburgh Development Working Group (short life)	Transport and Environment	1	7	24-Apr-18
24	Tram All Party Oversight Group (standing)	Transport and Environment	3	10	26-Jun-19
25	Transport Forum (standing)	Transport and Environment	0	2	29-Mar-19
26	Single Use Plastics Working Group (short life)	Transport and Environment	2	1	12-Mar-19
27	Cammo Estate Advisory Committee (standing)	Transport and Environment	2	4	12-Jun-19

<u>Appendix 2</u> - City of Edinburgh Council - Working Group Framework

- The chair of a working group will be agreed by the parent committee.

- Membership of 'Working Groups' will be open to all members of the parent committee (and substitutes), or as agreed by the parent committee; with officers and outside representatives being involved, as required.

- The chair will be able to add to the membership of a working group but not remove members who must be changed by the parent committee.

- Working Groups should have a defined written remit, and a time-frame for delivery of that remit; all to be agreed by the relevant parent committee

- Working Groups will agree flexible meeting arrangements, to recognise individual workloads, wherever appropriate

- Parent committees to consider annual re-appointment reports confirming the lifespan and necessity for a working group. Committees should confirm that working groups have clear objectives and give consideration as to whether a working group is the correct vehicle to take these forward.